

LETTER FROM DR. JOHN D. BIGGER

Manila, Philippine Islands  
November 12, 1945

Dear Friends:

The local papers are full of the trial of General Yamashita, the tiger, and the atrocities which he permitted. A U. S. A. chaplain who came in with the first soldiers told last night of some of the things he had seen. In one Philippine house they found 100 charred bodies of women and children who were sprayed with gasoline then set fire. Another, a two-months old baby was found with its body punctured with many bayonet wounds and one through the chest. The Chaplain told that the Japs had tortured the baby with their bayonets before the parents, killed it, then beheaded the father, raped the woman and then thrust a bayonet through her. He said that in many villages the same things had been done. Some one should certainly pay for such inhumanity.

Sunday afternoon - Chaplain Dana who is here at a replacement Camp, waiting to embark for the U. S., asked us to take him up to his former hospital unit at Tarlac about 80 miles north of here, as he wanted to see if any mail had come for him. He said the hospital was closing and thought we might get some of the expendables (no instruments but supplies that could be used up, like cotton, gauze, drugs, etc.)

We got there just in time for dinner 6:30 P. M. and enjoyed a good steak, peas, fresh potatoes, ice water, etc. The Hospital was empty, so Roy Ball and I had a good night's rest on a real American hospital bed.

Monday a. m. Roy wanted to see an old friend, Spanish, who was the superintendent of a Sugar Central at Negros Island but was transferred to the one 5 miles from Tarlac, so we drove down there and they had so many things to talk about that we stayed to lunch, fried chicken, etc. Spanish style. The U. S. Army had taken over the plant, so the Baratas had plenty of good food to eat. I was glad of the opportunity to meet a cultured Spanish Philippine family. Mr. Barata's family lives in Spain and his wife, a very vivacious and pretty young matron, spent ten years there. I was surprised to learn that many of the Spanish here are pro-American.

After lunch we went back to the army camp and tried to get together the materials that we could have, but found there was so much, and the officers who came out with us had to get back to their base that night, so we left for Manila about 5:30 P. M. and arrived at the camp 18 miles beyond Manila at 9 P. M. It was so late they asked us to spend the night there. We got a real taste of camp life, folding cots on sloping ground, mud everywhere, (it was cool enough for blankets) and a chow line for breakfast.

Coming back to Manila we got a puncture and we did not get started to Tarlac until 4 P. M. They gave us supper at the hospital but they had already taken down the hospital huts and beds, so Roy and I went over the Sugar Central for the night and had a pleasant visit and a restful night, although a rat stole one of my sox for a sleeping bag! It rained hard during the night.

There was so much equipment, but no beds or instruments, that we had to borrow a big truck to haul it over to the Sugar Central; they loaned us a room to store it in. Just as we had it ready to take away a representative from the provincial hospital came to get it; some officer had told them they could have it but we had the word from the commanding officer, and so they went away. Much of the material was being stolen and went into the black market. Thousands of dollars worth of material is passing into the hands of the black market.

The material we obtained in Tarlac will be sent to the U. B. Hospital at San Fernando. I expect to go to Baguio Wednesday with Chaplain Baldwin and Mr. Frei in a Jeep; we will take some White Cross supplies and medicine for local needs there.

Miss Odee, one of the Church Committee for Relief in Asia, a Methodist, was over Saturday and got a good supply of bandages, cotton gauze, blankets, sheets, and drugs for the Mary Johnston Hospital dispensary they are starting now. Saturday P. M. a few of the missionaries and three chaplains took Roy's car, and two jeeps, and drove 50 miles out to Tagaytay, a small mountain overlooking Taal and its little island that has an old crater and little lake. We had a fine supper. It was a lovely spot for a picnic, concrete road nearly all the way, most of the paved roads around here have been more or less destroyed.

The larger order of instruments and drugs that we had ordered in New York have been here in Manila harbor (in ship) for two weeks. There is no pier available to land freight. Transportation now is our biggest problem, as the army has control of everything, and unless one has a military permit (procured in Washington) he does not get very far. The Chaplains have been a big help to us in this and many other ways.

Mr. Bousman (Presbyterian missionary) is going by boat to Dumaguete on Friday and he is taking several bales of clothing and White Cross supplies and drugs with him. I may get to fly to Culion with Mr. Frei next week to inspect the Leper Colony there. They are in a most desperate condition, especially those who cannot help themselves, as the Japanese did not send them any food, and all those able to run away did so and are back at their homes throughout the Islands.

We will try to get a large enough plane to take them some supplies.

Sunday 11th - I did not have time to finish this before we left for San Fernando and Baguio.

The direct road to Baguio was impassable and it took us about nine hours to go via Bauang, but we arrived before dark and went at once to the Rodgers' place. The house was completely destroyed. A large bomb had hit one corner and there was a crater, where the house had been, about 25 feet by 8 feet deep.

The Rodgers' cook had built him a little tin house from scraps of corrugated roofing and was quite comfortable. He had managed to slip much of the Rodgers' furniture from the house when the Jap guards were away, before it was destroyed. As there is no lumber or other building material to be procured, all the houses or shacks are being constructed from tin roofing, usually all that was left. I never imagined there could be such universal destruction even in the country. Houses are so scarce that the cook was offered 4,000 pesos for his.

We spent Wednesday and Thursday night with him. Thursday it rained most of the day but we had a good sight-seeing of the place or what was left of it. No real reconstruction has started yet; the people seem to be in a kind of daze.

However, the farmers have been busy and already rice was being harvested all along the way, a good crop, so there will be sufficient food this winter, where rice is grown or can be transported.

I have never seen finer gardens than along Trinidad valley. They are owned largely by Chinese and worked by the Negritos, who seem to be good workers.

After lunch we started to go over to the Baguio Cemetery to see Dr. Rodgers' grave. He died at his home the first part of the war. But, in trying to cross a mud puddle in the road, we found later it was a bomb crater full of water, the jeep got in too deep to crawl out so the Chaplain walked a mile into town and had an army car wrecker come and pull us out.

In stead of going to the cemetery we started out to see the country north of Baguio along the Trinidad Valley. It is a beautiful rugged, mountainous region that reminds me very much of the mountains of Korea.

The road was under repair a good deal of the way and, after about 50 miles, it became so rough we turned back. All along the road were wrecked cars of all kinds. The roofs of most of them were peppered with machine gun bullets, evidently fired from the air. There were numerous fox holes along the road and when we turned back the skeleton of a Jap soldier, town clothing and helmet half flown away, was lying near one of the fox holes, a grim reminder of the terrible struggle that took place in their taking of Baguio. Some of the American companies lost 80% of their personnel in this campaign.

The hospital where Mrs. Rodgers was a patient when the bombing took place was completely burned and we found her grave on a slope just outside the hospital grounds. Their servants will remove her body to the cemetery beside her husband as soon as permission is granted. The Rodgers were the first pioneer missionaries of the Presbyterian Mission in the Philippines. Their wish will be fulfilled to rest together in their beloved adopted land. Friday morning we drove down to San Fernando and visited the U. B. mission hospital. The building had been bombed by the American forces on their landing there but it was unusually well constructed (by a Japanese contractor) and all the outer walls, floors and roof were intact, so that the Provincial Government was conducting a small hospital and clinic there. They said that they were evacuating on the 15th at the request of the mission doctor Viduya. He is getting released in December and plans to reopen the hospital.

We had intended sending to him the surplus supplies we had received from Tarlac but, three days ago, he had procured from the Hospital where he is the same kind of expendables we had, so will not send ours to him.

However, he has no instruments, beds or linen. We are sending him instruments that are now in Manila awaiting to be unloaded (we learned today that they will come ashore tomorrow, after two weeks waiting). He will be given also some White Cross supplies and he can procure folding cots from the army for temporary use.

Tomorrow the first shipment of books, clothing and medical supplies will be sent with Mr. Bousman to Dumaguete by boat.

So far civilian transportation has been completely disrupted. The army has charge of the railroad, and it runs only to San Fernando and about 25 miles south to Los Banos. The interisland boats are just beginning to carry civilian passengers and freight, and we hope to get out supplies to the provinces from now on, when they arrive. Yesterday's paper said that 20 % of the present cargo of the President Pierce is whiskey and a large part cigarettes.

Wherever the U. S. army has been, great quantities of food and other material have been given to the people; wages are high, so those willing to work have money, but prices have increased from 5 to 20 times the original cost.

The people out in the country who have not contacted the army, and where the roads are impassable, are suffering the most. Their greatest need now is clothing, medicine and building material, also farm implements.

Many of the churches and schools of all kinds are completely destroyed.

The U. S. Army is moving large quantities of their supplies to Japan and Korea but there will be left here millions of dollars worth of all kinds of food, hospital supplies, vehicles, and building material that will be turned over to the Commonwealth Government, besides the billion dollars that United States is giving.

The American Red Cross has given rice and medicine and the U. N.R.R.A. has donated one million dollars and flour.

Much material has passed into the hands of the black market but the army and the Philippine Government are trying to stop this.

We may be going to the southern islands soon to make a survey of the needs in that area. Word has just come that Dr. Carson, president of Silliman, is on his way out. Mr. Steele is coming by plane on the 15th, and Mr. Stephen Smith and Mrs. Bell will be coming in January. This is good news for their fellow missionaries out here and their Philippine friends.

With best wishes to you all for a happy Christmas time,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN D. BIGGER

LETTER FROM DR. JOHN D. BIGGER

Seoul, Korea  
December 27, 1945

Dear Dr. Hooper:

The trip to Seoul was uneventful. We left Manila Wednesday at mid-night, arrived in Yokohama Thursday at 4:30 p.m., spent the night there, left at 5 a.m. and arrived in Seoul Friday at 4 P.M. They put me up for the night at the transients officers' club, and I came over to contact Dr. Horace H. Underwood Sat, A.M.

Without having time to talk things over with him, he took me in to meet Gen. Arnold, then General Hodge. They evidently had the idea that I was coming up here to stay and had already assigned me a desk in the Bureau of Public Health and Welfare. The Colonel in charge of this department seems to be a very fine man and has pretty well organized his department, but he received his orders today and expects to leave in a day or two for home.

He seems to think that I will be a big help, as advisor, in carrying out his plans. This puts me in a very difficult position as I had expected, from what Chaplain Bennet wrote me, that I was coming to make a short inspection of conditions, then return to my work in the Philippines.

As for the relief work in the Philippine Islands, Roy Bell had it pretty well in hand and we had distributed all the units that were sent out from New York, and most of the hospital supplies had been given out or assigned before I left.

At present Mr. Bell has been spending his time in taking Mr. Steele around to meet different military men who have the disposal and sale of surplus war material. At present there is very little available material unless a good price is paid for it.

The Seventh Day adventists have purchased two 225 bed hospital units at the regular price and the Mary Knoll Mission another.

The U.N.R.R.A. have purchased ten more units of 250-500 and 1000 bed capacity for China. If there is anyone responsible to receive any of these units among the mission hospitals they stand a good chance of receiving some help, free, from these supplies.

On leaving Manila I asked Mr. Steele, "What shall I do in case I should be asked to work here." He said that I should use my own judgment as to whether I am needed more in Korea than in the Philippines. The different Mission Boards working in the Philippine Islands already have their own agents on the field and looking after their work and distributing relief supplies assigned to their fields.

I hoped to get to all four of our hospitals there. At present Dr. Carson is looking after the hospital at Dumaguete.

The doctor at Tagbilaran is ready to go to work as soon as one of our units gets there. The doctor at Tacloban is now running a small hospital near by. The mission hospital is rented to the provincial Gov. for six months. The Milwaukee hospital is completely destroyed and no available doctor there to start work.

As there is no immediate need for me to return to Manila, I think that I will stay here for a few days to see how things work out.

Below is a survey of our mission property which Koreans, who have recently been to the different stations, have reported to me.

The Japanese Government seems to have sold a good deal of our institutional property to individuals and deposited the money in the Bank of Chosen.

Missionary personal property in most places was all auctioned off and money deposited in the Bank of Chosen. According to reports there is no furniture of any kind left in any missionaries' homes.

Syenchun

Houses stripped, some of the compound used by Korean School.  
Hospital, sold to Korean Red Cross but is being run by Dr. Ryn, co-worker with Dr. Smith. The hospital is short of supplies.

Pyongyang - Reported in fine shape, full operation and staff, 70 nurses:  
College dorm that was loaned to the hospital is now used as nurses' home.  
The girls' school (Miss Snook) dormitory is being used by the hospital for  
internal medicine and pediatric patients.  
The other buildings of the girls' school are being used by Provincial  
Girls' School.  
The college is being used by Russian Army.  
The women's Bible Institute is used by cloth factory.  
One home used by Lawyer Pok.  
Others were used by Japanese, now empty.  
Foreign school and dormitory used by volunteer army.

Seoul, most of property intact.  
2 houses habitable. Dr. Underwood bought furniture for one.  
Dr. Underwood has already written to you about conditions here.

Chairyung  
Hospital still running. It was sold before the war.  
Residences in rather bad shape.

Chungju  
Government school is using the hospital; houses stripped but in fair  
condition.

Andong  
Hospital is being used for school girls' dormitory houses.

Taiku  
Hospital running. Supt. Dr. Chang formerly from Pyongyang; hospital short  
of funds and has received help from U.S. Army.  
Houses being occupied by Korean military.  
Leprosarium, taken over by Provincial Government and receiving some help  
from the U.S.A. (All the Leprosaria are taken over and run by Provincial  
or National Government under the Army.)  
Severance hospital is badly run down. They have received a little help  
from the U.S.A. They asked me to be on their Board of Directors and also  
to teach medical Ethics to the students. I have not answered them yet.  
Dr. Underwood seems to be very much in demand by everyone as a consultant.

Sincerely yours,

John D. Bigger

P.S. Every Korean I have met requests all missionaries to come back. There is much  
doubt whether the United Church will survive. The majority of laymen are for  
it but most pastors against.